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**ROMNEY ADMINISTRATION ANNOUNCES
CONSERVATION LAND PURCHASE IN BARRE**

BARRE-- Environmental Affairs Secretary Ellen Herzfelder today announced the acquisition of 212 acres of conservation land in Barre and Hardwick. Formerly owned by the Lubelczyk family, the state Division of Fisheries and Wildlife purchased the land from the East Quabbin Land Trust for \$530,000. The 212 acres will become part of the Division of Fisheries & Wildlife's 650-acre Raccoon Hill Wildlife Management Area (WMA).

"The Lubelczyk property offers important wildlife habitat and protection for key water supplies," said Secretary Herzfelder. "This strategic acquisition was made possible by a group of partners who care deeply about this land's environmental significance - I would especially like to thank the members of the East Quabbin Land Trust for the critical role they played in this public-private partnership effort."

Herzfelder said the East Quabbin Land Trust contributed \$100,000 toward the property's acquisition and worked closely with the Lubelczyk family, The Trustees of Reservations, and the Division of Fisheries & Wildlife to complete the acquisition process. The East Quabbin Land Trust will also donate a conservation restriction on another valuable 100-acre property in the area to the Division of Fisheries & Wildlife.

"This land acquisition is a perfect illustration of why we need to continue to allocate funds for land preservation and protection," said Senator Stephen M. Brewer. "With this money, we are preserving forever a beautiful piece of land encompassing scenic vistas and vast wildlife habitats, and we are forging ahead with our efforts to establish corridors of protected land in the Commonwealth. I commend the East Quabbin Land Trust and Fish and Wildlife for partnering in a successful effort to protect this land."

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The 212 acres of land deeded to the Division of Fisheries & Wildlife provides a critical link between the Raccoon Hill WMA and the 58,000 acres of water supply protection land managed by the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) at Quabbin Reservoir. Streams from this property flow directly into the Quabbin, and the land is recognized by the Division of Fisheries & Wildlife's BioMap and Living Waters programs as statewide significant habitat. The Massachusetts Audubon Society recognizes the area as one of the most important bird habitats in central Massachusetts.

Members of the East Quabbin Land Trust, The Trustees of Reservations, the Massachusetts Sportsmen's Council and other open space advocates were on hand for the announcement.

The Raccoon Hill WMA consists of mixed woodlands, open fields, and wetlands and the new property abuts the upper reaches of Raccoon Hill Brook. The protected parcel serves as a corridor connection between the Raccoon Hill WMA, Quabbin Reservation, Muddy Brook WMA, and Moose Brook WMA. The mix of habitats is home to grouse, white-tailed deer, wild turkey, beaver, and many other wildlife species. The purchase will provide better access to the wildlife area and recreational opportunities such as fishing, hunting, hiking, cross-country skiing, and wildlife viewing for the state's residents.

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